RNA FOR A BETTER LIFE IN THE HEIGHTS
DECEMBER 1985 – JANUARY 1986

RIVERVIEW Neighborhood Association

232 Ogden Avenue – Jersey City, N.J. 07307 – (201) 798-0493

RNA IS NOT AFFILIATED WITH ANY POLITICAL PARTY, ORGANIZATION OR ELECTED OFFICIAL.

HEAR YE!!

RIVERVIEW PARK FORUM

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1985

Photo: Vito Brunetti

The RNA is proud to announce a PUBLIC FORUM ON RIVERVIEW PARK to take place on December 10, 1985 at P.S. 8 (Hancock and Franklin Streets) in the auditorium.

The purpose of the Forum is to discuss with the community the history, present status, problems, solutions and long range plans for Riverview Park. Bob Lewis, RNA's Vice Chairman, will moderate the meeting and preside over a panel of twelve city officials, neighborhood leaders and community members.

From this forum, RNA hopes to gather a consensus from the community to present to the City for the long overdue renovation of the Park.

The door will be open to the public at six o'clock to allow inspection of several proposed models of the Park and a wall panel of historic pictures, slides, drawings and articles about the Park. The official meeting begins at seven o'clock in the evening.

DO YOU LOVE RIVERVIEW PARK? BE THERE!

RIVERVIEW PARK: AN ASSESSMENT
CHUCK HOLLOWELL

After months of meetings with the RNA Parks Committee and discussions with neighbors, I, as chairman of the Parks Committee, submit to you what I perceive as a consensus of the problems and possible solutions.

I. MAINTENANCE AND CLEANLINESS

A. Glass & Dog Feces

Despite the fact the Department of Public Works has been spending more time cleaning the park and the Police Department has beefed up patrols in the park, the number one problem and RNA's number one priority is cleaning the park of broken glass and dog feces. I personally find it a disgrace to Jersey City that children cannot play without the fear of falling and getting cut by broken pieces of glass and neighbors who take a stroll have to dodge the dog dirt that is scattered throughout the park. Several neighborhood children have had to be rushed to hospitals for stitches after falling on broken glass in the park. My own children have stepped in dog feces several times. Although there is a Dog Feces Ordinance, it is never enforced.

Proposed Solutions:

1. Construct a centrally located dogwalk and have it cleaned regularly.
2. Continuation of the recent increase of police surveillance and foot patrols.
3. Installation of vandal-proof trash bins.
4. Support for a bottle tax bill.
5. Communicate with and get cooperation from the youths responsible for glass in the park.

II. RESTORATION

A. The cliff retaining wall is one of the most dangerous areas of the park.

Proposed Solution:

Remove the remaining iron fence on the south side of the park and use it to repair the missing and broken pieces on the north side. The southern end of wall should be built up several feet using two cement blocks above present concrete base topped with a 45 degree cap to prevent anyone from sitting on top of the wall. We propose this as a temporary solution because it will alleviate the present danger at a minimal cost.

B. The Gazebo is the centerpiece of our park and in bad need of repair and cleaning.

Proposed Solution:

1. Remove the remaining upper walls and replace all the walls with iron railings. This will improve the safety of non-existant walls and prevent anyone from hiding behind the existing brick walls.
2. Walls steamcleaned.
3. Reroof with brown asbestos shingling; inner ceiling with aluminum fireproof materials.
4. Side walks - Repair
5. Riverview walk - Restore
6. Landscape - Replace dead trees, shubbery, grass and correct erosion problems.

III. PARKS'S FUTURE

Although the committee members differ on ideas for future projects, they agree on several points.

A. The park has been a combination active/passive park for most of its existence. There is a need for an active area where children can play and yet a desire by neighbors to have a passive area where they can walk, sit, and enjoy the view without noise from recreation and loud radios.

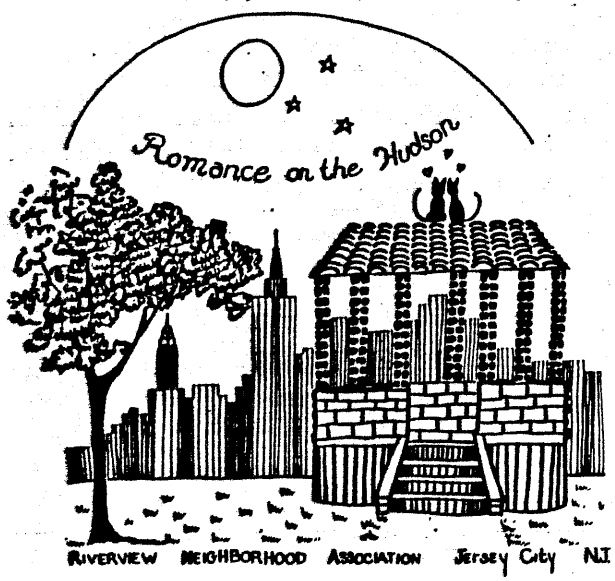
B. Before anything new is added to the park we need assurances from the Police Department that they will continue surveillance of the park and a commitment from neighbors to report acts of vandalism. Many improvements made in past were destroyed and/or vandalized within days.

C. Lighting - Some neighbors have mentioned the need for better lighting. The NIP recommended installing 30 lamps at this time; we feel the lamps are not a priority.
   1. The proposed lamps will not conform with the historic nature of the park.
   2. The illumination from these lamps will obliterate the magnificent panoramic view of New York.
   3. These lamps were to be 8 to 10 feet off the ground making them an easy target for vandals.

D. The Italian-American club has mentioned their desire for a bocci ball court. We welcome their positive influence in the park but the placement of the court should be given careful consideration.

E. Any redevelopment should be carefully planned. The restoration should not be a mish-mash of ideas all thrown together but carefully planned taking in the needs and desires of the community. Since Riverview Park has been declared a Historic Site, its restoration should be made to conform to the original concept of the park.

(Mr. Hollowell is chairperson of RNA'S Park Committee)



This is the design by Risa Gerber that won the contest for the T-Shirt.

THE NEIGHBORHOOD IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMS INVOLVEMENT WITH RIVERVIEW PARK

TED FLACH

As an original member of the Neighborhood Improvement Committee (N.I.P.) I believe there is a need to clarify some points regarding this Committee. The objectives and purpose under the By-Laws were specifically to provide for citizen's participation in determining the expenditure of the N.I.P. funds, a subsection of the Community Development Block Grant (C.D.B.G.) program.

The Committee was to receive, review and select proposals for the expenditure of N.I.P. funds. Membership consisted of the Council members from the Ward, the three Citywide Citizen's Steering Committee members from the Ward and other representatives of the Ward in sufficient number to represent all sections of the Ward.

With the assistance at that time of a competent Heights Neighborhood Planner, a well organized and fully representative Heights committee was formed (before the current Block Associations and Block Watch programs were fully realized.) Funds were earmarked and expended for programs that would benefit all sections of the Heights.

These varied programs, which eventually included River View Park Rehabilitation, were thoroughly investigated and professionallly researched by the Neighborhood Planner and the Committee, and decisions were made on a consensus basis. Each program, the Park or the Trees or whatever, was considered as a concern of everyone in the Heights that would benefit all the residents.

There were and have been delays, beyond the control of the N.I.P. Committee, which have been frustrating and time consuming. In fact, many people originally involved are no longer around and new people have come into the picture. However, nothing was projected by the N.I.P. Committee until it was considered to be the best that could be obtained for the conditions involved and funds available.

(Mr. Flach is the chairman of the Community Relations Council).

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE ON RIVERVIEW PARK

THEODORE CONRAD

(Photo : 1906)

William P. Katenhuber owner and editor of the Palisade Eagle procured the site for the park, raised the flag and made the opening speech at the dedication ceremony of Riverview Park approximately eighty-four years ago.

Tourists had been coming up the elevated line from Hoboken and New York to the Grand View Hall beer garden located on Ogden Avenue between Franklin and Ferry Streets. When benches were first placed on walks in the park facing the view they were crowded on weekends with people eager to get a glimpse of the river before the skyscrapers first made their appearance.

The park was beautifully maintained with flowers and shrubs. At one time sheep were even allowed to graze on the lawn much to the delight of small children. A small playground in a 50' x 100' lot on the west side of the park served the needs of the area when Jersey City's population was one third larger than it is now. The Park pavilion, often called the bandstand, was used for concerts evenings and weekends. The lower portion with toilet facilities and storage space for garden tools was also used as a police station by the police patrolling the immediate area.

Around 1935 when WPA projects were being used to provide work for the unemployed a crew of workers were sent to "improve" the park. For no good reason the walkway with benches facing the view was eliminated along with all the shrubbery on the steep incline which in a short time developed a serious erosion problem. All the hundreds of feet of well trimmed hedges around the grass plots on the western side which fenced in the sheep were cut off, the sheep and flowers were eliminated, and the park began to take on its present drab appearance. The little playground was moved to the delightfully green passive recreation area facing the view and later encased in an ugly twelve foot high chainlink enclosure, all of which blighted the southern end of the park. Tennis courts, now an area for basketball, extended to one third of the area facing the view. A boccie court ruined still more of the remaining walkway on the view side. All these recreation facilities could have been located on the other side of the park instead of in the foreground and vantage point of the most magnificent panoramic view of Manhattan.

In 1960 the Jersey City Housing Authority had plans to use Riverview Park as a Golden Age Housing site. Ruth & Ted Conrad led the fight to save the park and won.

Since the Doric Apartment on former parkland has cut off the view of New York from Washington Park, Riverview Park is the last clear open space for the public to be able to enjoy this breathtaking view. The Historic District Commission, well aware of the local efforts to upgrade the area and the importance of perpetuating the view, are opposed to any further installations of

Continued on page 5

THE PARK BELONGS TO ALL THE PEOPLE
THOMAS HART

We are fortunate here in the Heights to include four parks among our natural resources. This is quite a large resource if we consider that our entire area comprises only some two and a half square miles. That very same smallness of size is what makes our parks so vital to us. They provide a break from the concrete and the clay, from the crowds and the commotion. We should value them as the treasures which they are.

However, our parks suffered all those national urban park problems of the recent decades. In the latter Seventies, we began revitalization funding for our precious green areas. There was, of course, provision to upgrade our beloved Historic River View Park.

There was, though, also a necessity to implement the improvements on a proper time frame. To do something too soon would have resulted in its early and prompt destruction. We had to work on the improvement of the surrounding areas of the park and to simultaneously work at the elimination of the social problems relative to the park.

We now find ourselves at a time when improvement seems a viable endeavor. Our surrounding vicinity has seen a physical and social improvement and there are now even more people who care about the improvement. There are some bureaucratic steps to be taken but that is part of the course and is certainly a surmountable obstacle.

However, we also find ourselves at a time when we must chart the proper steps. Do we retain the improvements as established by the dedicated efforts of the Heights Neighborhood Improvement Committee members and implement them as set forth? Do we review those original proposals and amend them so as to include what some perceive as new and necessary changes?

That is the purpose of the upcoming forum. To delineate exactly what the improvements should be within this wonderful place called River View Park.

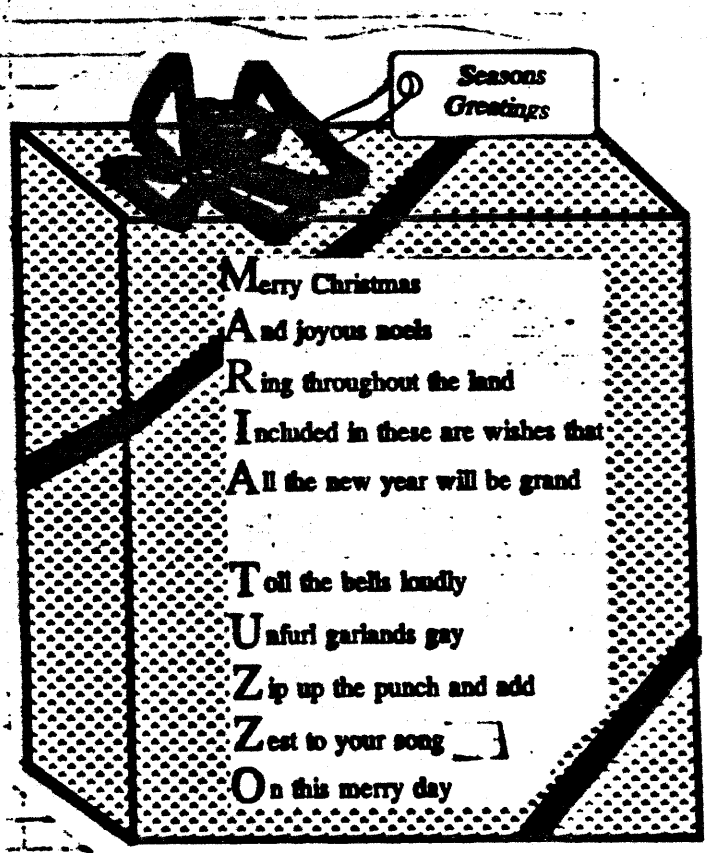
I am suggesting that all those persons whose lives include that park to exercise their views and allow us the value of your ideas. The Park belongs to all the people of the Heights and we must be responsible to our duty to do what is best in and for Historic River View Park.

(Mr. Hart is the Councilman in Ward D)

TED CONRAD Continued

recreational equipment which can become a detraction for present and future generations from enjoying this view. The park is not only a historic site but a scenic landmark as well.

(Mr. Conrad is the founder of friends of Historic Riverview Park).


Seasons Greetings
Merry Christmas
And joyous noels
Ring throughout the land
Included in these are wishes that
All the new year will be grand
Toll the bells loudly
Unfurl garlands gay
Zip up the punch and add
Zest to your song
On this merry day

WITHOUT A PLAN:
YOU START WITH SOMETHING BEAUTIFUL,
ADD SOMETHING NICE TO GO WITH IT, PUT A LITTLE "EXTRA"
TO FINISH IT OFF, AND BEFORE YOU KNOW IT ,,,
IT'S NOT BEAUTIFUL ANYMORE ,,, AND IT DOESN'T WORK SO GOOD EITHER

"A PICTURE IS WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS"
DEAN HOWELL/LYNDA GROSE

In 125 words I've been asked to write about the importance of having a comprehensive plan or concept in the development of Riverview Park-- a plan that would unify it's various parts and uses-- one that has foresight as well as hindsight, and one that would permit the citizenry through the years to move in and out, using the Park in contemporary ways without leaving damaging marks that permanently distort the plan or the park itself. This is obviously a tough objective. To create and develop such a plan requires cooperation, and a great deal of community effort and spirit. It's time-- don't you think? A picture is worth a thousand words:

(Dean & Linda are the directors of Solo Studios on Palisade Avenue.

COMMUNITY AWARENESS COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Risa Gerber *Carin Lewis* *Raquel Sweeny*
Marie "Dee" Ipsaro *Edith Springer* *Maria Tuzzo*

SPECIAL THANKS TO KATHY BRENNAN
NEWSLETTER LAYOUT AND DESIGN: Raquel Sweeny

Special thanks to Melba, Andrea Citarelli and Vito Brunetti.

NOTE:
The article reporting on the November meeting with Mayor Cucci, Councilmen Brooks, Hart, and Kaminski and other news events about our neighborhood will appear in our next newsletter.

HAVE A JOYOUS AND HEALTHY HOLIDAY!!

HAVE A HAPPY NEW YEAR!!!

SEE YOU ALL NEXT YEAR!!!!